



# Instructional Support

## April 2017 Newsletter



Supporting Massachusetts educators to prepare all of our students for success in the world that awaits them after high school.

### Writing Standards in Action Project

Writing is a key skill for success after high school. For that reason, the state's standards are designed to be both rigorous and achievable for all students. To clearly demonstrate strong grade-level writing, ESE's Writing Standards in Action (WSA) Project publishes annotated student writing exemplars that are [available to download](#) for use in classroom instruction and professional learning.

Teachers and students are encouraged when they see mastery of the standards in actual student work. "The exemplars make the standards come alive and have meaning," says Leslie Laud, Director of [thinkSRSD](#) and longtime WSA participant. "When kids see something that is written by another kid, it inspires them even if they aren't great writers. It gives them a sense of 'Hey, I can do that, too.'"

The exemplars show students what the expectations are for their writing. In some classrooms, students compare the exemplars to other texts to see the common qualities of strong writing. Kate Tobiasson, language arts teacher at Quinn Middle School in Hudson and WSA participant, recently used a seventh-grade exemplar to compare and contrast with her co-teacher's master's thesis on the fall of Rome. Although her students were skeptical at first, Tobiasson says that they quickly learned that "both pieces had a thesis, evidence and analysis. The exemplar allowed them to see the skills they could develop as seventh-grade writers."

For teachers, the exemplars can anchor lesson plans and serve as key professional development resources. Teachers are using exemplars to calibrate their expectations for grade-level writing and inform collaborative planning for the instructional strategies that guide their students to master the standards.

"When teachers look at the standards alone," says Tobiasson. "They often say, 'Our kids can't do this. That level of writing is just not going to happen.' But when they look at a WSA piece, they say, 'Oh! Our kids can do *that*.' The standards are not intimidating when you look at the true exemplars and what makes them great."

Laud says, "Teachers are hungry to see these exemplars because they give hope and vision. Teachers can bring the exemplars back to their classrooms and say, 'Yeah, my kids can reach this.'"

"The WSA committee works really hard to choose pieces that are attainable for students," says Tobiasson. "Teachers can show them to their students and say, 'This is a real, true A, not a *holy bananas* A.'"

For parents and guardians, the exemplars clearly demonstrate the expectations for writing at their child's grade level. The exemplars are succinct, charming and unedited. Their authenticity makes the standards more accessible for all readers.

The WSA project continues to grow. In addition to welcoming new submissions from students, we are seeking more reviewers to join our talented team. Reviewers meet approximately bimonthly for a full day to review student work and annotate the samples. ESE reimburses for travel expenses and substitute teachers. Please contact [Rachel Bradshaw](#) if you are interested in participating or submitting student work.

Reviewers are eager to spread the word.

#### Table of Contents

- [Inclusive Practice Spotlight](#)
- [Arts in the Mix](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Opportunities](#)
- [Key Updates](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

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#### Mark Your Calendar!

##### Civics Conference

Date: May 8  
Location: Edward M. Kennedy Institute (Boston, MA)

##### Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) Summer Institute

Date: June 26-27  
Location: DoubleTree by Hilton (Hyannis, MA)

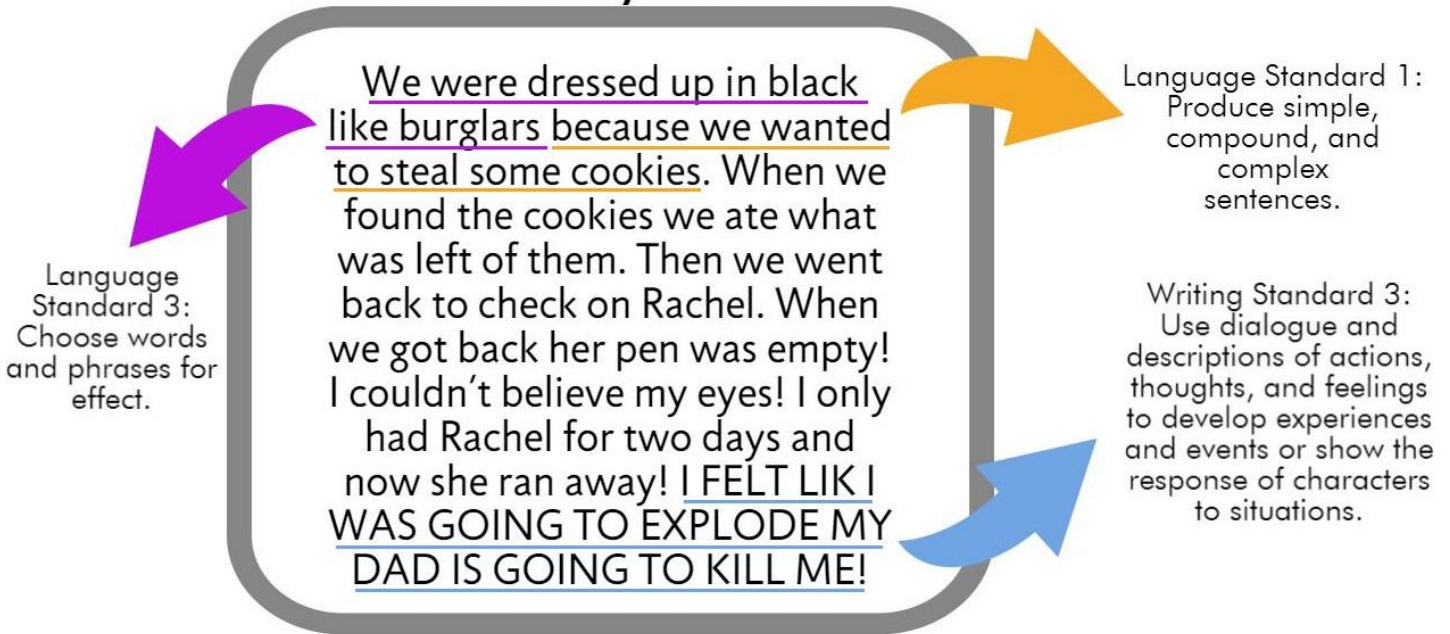


"The WSA has been by far the best professional development of my entire career because of the quality of people," says Laud. "We have an atmosphere of deep engagement that fosters deep thoughtfulness. The structure and tone in these meetings is profoundly valuable and respectful."

"The WSA is food for my soul as a teacher," says Tobiasson.

Please take a look at our [WSA resources](#) and [let us know](#) if you have any suggestions or feedback. We would love to hear about how you are using these resources in your schools or districts!

## Grade 3 Narrative Exemplar: "Runaway Rachel"



### Inclusive Practice Spotlight: Pioneer Valley and Berkshire + DSACs



This year, the Pioneer Valley and Berkshire+ DSACs initiated an Inclusive Practice Network designed to heighten awareness of the importance of inclusive practices for all students, share tools and resources around these practices, and provide a forum for districts to learn from one another. At the fall kick-off meeting, Bill Henderson, a pioneer in developing inclusive education programs, led teams in unpacking the culture, structure, instruction, and assessment practices of inclusive schools to help teams grapple with ways to approach supporting all students successfully in their classrooms. A team from the Dexter Park Innovation School in Orange, MA shared the work of moving to a full inclusion school.

The second Inclusive Practices Network meeting was held in West Springfield on January 27th. Approximately 180 educators from 27 districts came together to hear Dr. Lisa Dieker lead the session on Creating Inclusive Schools and Classrooms. Dr. Dieker shared resources and tools for creating inclusive classrooms and shared her experiences in classrooms around the country, capturing the audience with moving and personal stories. She invited her son, Joshua Dieker, an All-American gymnast at Springfield College, to share how growing up with Tourette's and multiple learning disabilities has helped him to succeed. Staff from West Springfield High School also shared experiences from their journey towards inclusive classrooms and their plans to move inclusion to the rest of the district.

We offer a number of resources to support educators who are striving to ensure that all students have great learning experiences, including our free [Foundations for Inclusive Practice Online Courses](#) and our [Guidebook](#). The Guidebook tools were written and field tested by more than 40 educators to ensure that they are conducive to teaching and learning. We encourage you to check out our [Inclusive Practice site](#) for more information.

## Arts in the Mix: Schools that Work

By Jonathan C. Rappaport, guest contributor

Urban schools across the Commonwealth are showing that increased, regular, sequential arts programs make a significant impact on school climate, academic achievement, student attendance, discipline referrals, and suspensions. Infusing the arts is also an effective turnaround strategy for underperforming schools.

- In Springfield, the **Sonido Musica Program** in nine secondary schools is credited with significantly improved attendance, reduced disciplinary incidents and suspensions, and improved educational outcomes over their non-Sonido peers — and this is with only one hour of programming per week!
- **The Peabody School** in Cambridge (K-5) has an ongoing **Kodály music program** that is four half-hour lessons weekly with each class. High-needs students in the program have achieved double the level of proficiency on MCAS tests compared with their non-Kodály peers. In fact, the results have been so impressive that the Cambridge School Committee voted to expand the program to every K-5 school in Cambridge.
- **The Worcester Arts Magnet School's** (PK-6) core mission includes both arts integration and dedicated arts time. Every child spends four to five hours per week in art, music, drama, and dance classes taught by licensed arts educators. The school, in spite of “losing” other instruction time to the arts, has maintained its Level 1 status and is so successful that it draws students from across the city.
- **The Orchard Gardens School in Roxbury** (K-8) was one of the five lowest performing schools in the state in 2010. The school is showing significant improvement in academics. The arts are critical, with every student participating in a minimum of four hours weekly in visual arts, dance, theatre, media and music taught by 6.5 FTE arts teachers. In 2012, Orchard Gardens was one of 8 schools in the nation designated to be “arts turnaround schools” by the [President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities](#).



Michael Walden, Art Specialist at the Worcester Arts Magnet School

Nationally, arts turnaround schools have a similar story. Elementary schools in the bottom 5% showed significant improvement in math, or ELA, or both areas within 3 years ([see here for data](#)). More examples of fabulous arts-centered school models in Boston are the **Henderson Inclusion School** and the **Boston Arts Academy**. Check them out!

[Jonathan C. Rappaport](#) is the Executive Director of Arts|Learning, an organization that provides training for educators on high quality arts curriculum and advocates for policies to support arts education in schools.

## Resources

### Guidance for Supporting Transgender Students

The Safe Schools Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students has a number of helpful [resources available](#) to help educators improve the school experience for LGBTQ students, including specific guidance on supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students.

If your school or district would like training for school administrators and staff on topics related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and school climate, please [submit a request here](#).

Teachers advising a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) can download our handbook [here](#). We also provide a GSA Jump-Start Guide [here](#). You may contact the Safe Schools Program Team [via email](#).



### PD Tool: Understanding the Impact of Poverty on Student Outcomes

ESE has developed the LEAP professional development [online interactive training module](#) in partnership with [Low-income Education Access Project \(LEAP\)](#) districts and educational collaboratives. The module provides the user with a fundamental understanding of the impact that poverty can have on student performance. It can be used by individuals, groups from elementary and secondary schools and districts, and higher education organizations.

Presentations of this training can be embedded into existing curriculum lessons and modified by the presenter to meet the specific needs of the audience and to promote discussion. The module can be presented in sections or in its entirety and participants are able to earn Professional Development Points (PDPs). Those viewing this module will review the findings related to special education in Massachusetts, improve understanding of the impact of poverty on student performance, and receive information regarding work that is happening in districts on this topic and related resources.

Please use [the module](#)! Please contact [Susan Fischer](#) with questions.

### Equal Access to Education Regardless of Immigration Status

On March 2, Attorney General Maura Healy issued an advisory reminding school districts of their “obligation under state and federal law to provide all students with equal access to primary and secondary education, irrespective of citizenship or immigration status.” The full advisory, which includes comments from Commissioner Mitchell Chester is [available here](#). We also recommend the following resources:

- [Refugee and Immigrant Information](#) (ESE)
- [Resource Guide: Supporting Undocumented Youth](#) (Department of Education)
- [Supporting Refugee Students](#) (Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners)
- [Supporting Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education](#) (Massachusetts Educators of English Language Learners)

### New ESL Model Curriculum Unit

We’re excited to offer **Grade 1-2, Language of Social Studies (LoSS) & Language of Language Arts (LoLA), Proficiency Levels 1-2: Justice, Courage, and Fairness** on our [Model Curriculum Units page](#). Registration is free and you can get started immediately. Resources around the **Next Generation ESL Curriculum Project** are housed on the [OELAAA Curriculum and Instruction](#) page. We also invite you to join us for informal conversation in the **Curriculum for Multilingual Learners** group on [Facebook](#)!



## Annual Convening: Highlights and Materials

We were excited to host 750 educators representing 250 districts, 25 educator preparation programs and twelve Educational Collaboratives at our Instructional Support Convening in February. It was a great opportunity to celebrate our successes and calibrate on the work we have ahead. We are inspired by the expertise, enthusiasm, and commitment of the educators in attendance.

In addition to the presentations and work sessions, we heard from two outstanding educators. Michelle Ryan from Randolph High School, who was our Massachusetts 2015 Milken Educator, provided the opening remarks on the first day (you can read them [here](#)). Sydney Chaffee from Codman Academy in Dorchester, who is our 2017 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and National Teacher of the Year finalist, provided the opening remarks on the second day (we recommended Sydney's interview on *Commonwealth Magazine's* [Codcast](#)). All materials from the sessions are available on our [Google Docs site](#).



Commissioner Mitchell Chester addresses the Convening.

## Opportunities

### Social and Emotional Learning in Massachusetts – Get Involved!

Massachusetts was selected to be a part of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) initiative to assist states with efforts to support students' social and emotional learning. ESE's [social and emotional learning website](#) includes more details about this initiative and some of the activities underway.

Social and Emotional Learning is one of ESE's [five core strategies](#): **Support social-emotional learning, health, and safety.**

Research and experience demonstrate that preparing all students for success (in school, the workplace, civic life, and more) includes attending to their social-emotional and health development. Furthermore, academic and social-emotional competencies are mutually reinforcing. Key levers in this work include:

- safe and supportive school climate and culture
- effective family engagement

ESE is committed to building out supports and policies in partnership with practitioners in the field and other state agencies to advance this work in the Commonwealth, both in and out of school. It is our goal to promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy and inclusive learning environments and address students' varied needs in order to improve educational outcomes for all students.

To receive occasional updates about the progress of this initiative or to submit comments about social and emotional learning in Massachusetts, please fill out this short form or email us.

### We Need Your Feedback! Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Surveys

To collect the data that will inform future SEI projects and guidance, ESE is surveying teachers and administrators. Each survey will prompt you to share the instructional planning processes and instructional practices that you commonly use or observe. The surveys are anonymous. The [teacher survey](#) is for SEI educators, coaches and specialists. District and school leadership – please take the [administrator survey](#).

## Districts: Offer the RETELL Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement Course

In an effort to make SEI Endorsement courses more widely available to educators, ESE has posted an open, rolling RFR to approve new providers of the course. School districts, collaboratives and vendors may submit a bid to become an approved provider. Approved districts may choose to charge a fee or to provide the course to their educators at no cost. They may also choose to offer the course to educators from outside of their district. Many districts have already applied, been approved, and are offering courses beginning this school year.

To apply, please review the information in the RFR carefully and submit a bid according to the instructions. Districts must meet **all** criteria outlined in Attachment A and Amendment I. The application is available [here](#).

If you are an educator interested in attaining your SEI endorsement, we will continue to update our list of approved providers [here](#).

### Coming Up: Civic Engagement and Learning Conference

On **Monday, May 8, 2017**, ESE and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate will host the second annual civics literacy conference. The goals of the conference are to understand the role civic learning plays in maintaining our democracy, increase civic knowledge and engagement among K-12 students, and make the natural connections between this discipline and literacy. Presenters will include K-12 educators and representatives from state, education, and community organizations. This event is free and will run from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

### Coming Up: Teacher and Principal Advisory Cabinet Applications

Every year, ESE assembles some of the most talented educators in the Commonwealth to work with us closely on a number of projects. The cabinets are opportunities for educators to shape policy, further their professional development, and network with other outstanding educators. If you are interested in either cabinet, [please fill out this interest form](#) so that we can alert you when applications open!

## Key Updates

### Revised English Language Arts and Math Standards

On March 28<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted unanimously to adopt revised learning standards in English language arts and literacy and in math. For over a year, ESE worked closely with experienced educators across the Commonwealth and incorporated feedback from the public. The new standards meet the unique needs of Massachusetts while raising the bar for quality nationwide.

For districts, the new standards will clarify expectations and build meaningful connections between disciplines. We are currently formatting and copyediting the revised Curriculum Frameworks for release later this spring. In the meantime, the changes are available [on our website](#) (ELA and literacy [here](#) and math [here](#)). ESE will begin helping districts implement the new standards starting this fall. Stay tuned!

### Amended Educator Evaluation Framework: What Does This Mean for Districts & Teachers?

On February 28, after collecting public comment for four months, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted 9-1 to [amend the existing educator evaluation regulations](#).

The most significant change is the elimination of a separate student impact rating. Under the new regulations, evaluators do not have to make a separate judgment about an educator's impact on student learning. Instead, student learning is embedded as an indicator within one of the evaluation framework's four standards.

So, what does this mean?

First, the categories of evidence have not changed. Educators and

### Public Comment on Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations

On February 28, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved the Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations (603 CMR 7.00) and two other sets of Regulations (603 CMR 44.00 and 603 CMR 13.00) for a period of public comment.

Over the last twelve months, ESE has been working on regulation revisions in response to Governor Baker's Executive Order 562

evaluators will continue to use multiple sources to paint a full picture of educator effectiveness. Second, the process should feel more streamlined. Under the former model, looking at teacher practice and teacher's impact on student learning happened separately because of the two-rating structure. Now, conversations about practice and impact can happen at the same time, reinforcing the connections between teacher actions and student outcomes.

The amended regulations focus on an overall evaluation in which professionals apply their judgment to a wide array of evidence to provide meaningful feedback and determine performance ratings. There are no formulas in the Massachusetts framework; professional judgement remains the determinant of ratings.

ESE is committed to supporting districts in implementing evaluation systems that help educators improve their practice through ongoing reflection and regular feedback.

If you have questions about educator evaluation, the amendments, or implementation, please contact our [educator evaluation team](#).

calling for a statewide regulatory review. ESE created a 17-member Working Group for Streamlining Educator Licensure Regulations & Policies that discussed a series of proposals to streamline the current regulations within the existing statutory structure. Following this work, we surveyed educators about the Working Group's recommendations received over 900 responses.

These draft recommendations were presented to the Board in February. You may submit your comments using the [links on this page](#). Public comment will be open until **May 1st, 2017**. We anticipate going back to the Board with a final set of Regulations at their June 28th meeting.

### ESE Awards Educator Preparation Partnership Innovation Grants

ESE awarded \$270,000 in competitive grants to seven partnerships between public school districts and educator preparation organizations. [The Elevate Preparation: Impact Children \(EPIC\)](#) Partnership Innovation Grants are designed to improve the pipeline of high-quality teachers from preparation programs into K-12 schools. The funding will be used to:

- develop programs that improve the quality and/or quantity of prospective teachers who meet partner districts' needs,
- revamp the expectations of educator preparation programs to better align with partner districts' priorities, *and*
- create new models for placement and support of student teachers.

By cultivating partnerships between district leaders and educator preparation organizations, the grants will advance innovative, evidence-based approaches to recruit, place, develop and retain new teachers, particularly in some of the hardest-to-fill roles. We will collect, document and share grant recipients' promising practices with other districts and educator preparation organizations. The recipients are:

Recipient	Amount
Boston University & Boston Public Schools	\$48,470
Boston University & Boston Public Schools	\$45,377
Framingham State University & The Education Cooperative	\$47,520
Endicott College & Chelsea Public Schools	\$46,800
University of Massachusetts Amherst & Holyoke Public Schools	\$46,300
Salem State University & Salem Public Schools	\$18,400
Assumption College & West Boylston Public Schools	\$15,000

# Contact Us!

To continuously improve this newsletter, we need your feedback! Please fill out [this short survey](#) and tell us how we can make this newsletter more helpful.

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## Other Communications Resources

There are number of ways to stay in touch with what is going on at ESE!

- ✓ [Commissioner's Weekly Update](#): email us with the subject line blank and "subscribe ESEUpdate [your name]" in the body to subscribe.
- ✓ [Teachers' Top Three from ESE](#): sign up [here](#)!
- ✓ [Educator Preparation Quarterly Newsletter](#): sign up [here](#)!
- ✓ The Department's Twitter account is [@MASchoolsK12](#)